

1 Timothy 1:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

Analysis

This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

Paul returns to his specific instructions for Timothy, using military language. "This charge" (tautēn tēn parangellian, ταύτην τὴν παραγγελλίαν) refers to the authoritative commands Paul has given regarding false teachers and sound doctrine. The verb "commit" (paratithemai, παρατίθεμαι) means to entrust, deposit, or hand over as a sacred trust—Timothy receives these instructions as stewardship to faithfully execute.

Paul addresses Timothy affectionately as "son" (teknon, τέκνον), emphasizing their spiritual father-son relationship. The instructions come "according to the prophecies which went before on thee" (kata tas proagousas epi se prophēteias, κατὰ τὰς προαγούσας ἐπὶ σὲ προφητείας). Apparently, prophetic words spoken over Timothy at his commissioning or ordination confirmed his calling to ministry (4:14). These prophecies authenticated his role and encouraged him for the difficult work ahead.

The purpose is military: "that thou by them mightest war a good warfare" (hina strateuē en autais tēn kalēn strateian, ἵνα στρατεύῃ ἐν αὐταῖς τὴν καλὴν στρατείαν). The noun strateia (στρατεία) means military campaign or warfare. Christian ministry isn't peaceful coexistence with error but active spiritual warfare

requiring courage, endurance, and strategic engagement. The prophecies strengthen Timothy for this battle, reminding him of divine calling and enabling.

Historical Context

Prophetic gifting played significant roles in early church life (Acts 13:1-3; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; 14:1-5; Ephesians 4:11). Prophets spoke God's word for edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3), and sometimes provided specific direction for ministry decisions. Timothy's commissioning apparently included prophetic confirmation of his calling, possibly through multiple prophets (note plural "prophecies").

The military metaphor for Christian ministry appears frequently in Paul's writings (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Timothy 2:3-4; 4:7). Paul understood ministry as spiritual warfare against Satan's kingdom, requiring divine weapons and supernatural power. This martial imagery wouldn't have seemed strange to ancient readers familiar with constant military conflict, but it challenges modern preferences for peaceful tolerance of all views.

Timothy faced genuine opposition in Ephesus—false teachers with influence, doctrinal error spreading in the church, and the challenge of confronting people older and more established than himself (5:1). The prophetic words spoken over him provided divine authentication of his authority and encouragement for the difficult conflict ahead. God had called him; prophecies confirmed it; he could proceed with confidence.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. In what specific ways do you experience Christian life and ministry as spiritual warfare requiring divine weapons?
2. How has God confirmed your calling to particular ministry roles, and how does remembering this strengthen you?
3. What balance do you maintain between peaceable humility and courageous confrontation of error when necessary?

Interlinear Text

Ταύτην τὴν παραγγελίαν παρατίθεμαί σοι τέκνον
G3778 G3588 **charge** G3852 **I commit** G3908 **unto thee** G4671 **son** G5043

Τιμόθεε κατὰ τὰς προαγούσας ἐπὶ σὲ προφητείας
Timothy G5095 **according to** G2596 G3588 **which went before** G4254 **on** G1909 **thee** G4571 **the prophecies** G4394

ἵνα στρατεύῃ ἐν αὐταῖς τὴν καλὴν στρατείαν
that G2443 **mightest war** G4754 **by** G1722 **them** G846 G3588 **a good** G2570 **warfare** G4752

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 4:14 (Parallel theme): Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

1 Timothy 6:20 (Parallel theme): O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

Philippians 2:22 (Parallel theme): But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

2 Timothy 4:7 (Good): I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

1 Timothy 1:2 (Parallel theme): Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Timothy 4:4 (Good): For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

2 Timothy 1:2 (Parallel theme): To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Titus 1:4 (Parallel theme): To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Philemon 1:10 (Parallel theme): I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: